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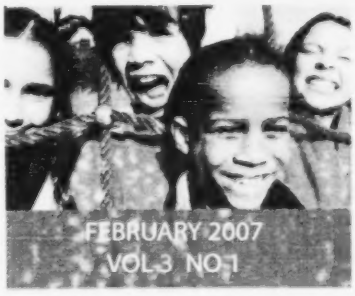
The Best Place on Earth



A Message from Doug Hughes

Regional Executive Director, Interior

As Regional Executive Director of the Interior, I'm pleased to have this opportunity to share with you some of the exciting work currently underway in our region.

Over the past 20 years, I've worked in a considerable number of MCFD positions which have provided me with a broad understanding of the vast array of work done by our staff and service providers every day. I believe I share with you a passion for social work and social policy, and for providing the best services we can to children and families.

Doug Hughes, Regional Executive Director, Interior Region

Since I began as a social worker in 1986, my goal at MCFD has always been to influence or impact larger systems changes, as well as improve our approaches and structures for the children and families of BC. As a ministry, and a region, we are committed to building strong connections with community organizations and integrating systems to help children and families get the services they need and want.

Some of the work currently happening in the Interior is important ground work for the years to come. We are working cooperatively with Aboriginal communities to deliver services that are in the spirit of how Aboriginal people would like them to be delivered, as well as involving and engaging them in decisions. Our hope is that Aboriginal communities will govern their own services as well as decide what those services will be. We are also working with our front-line staff to include them in the transformation process. They are the experts in the field, so it's critical that we learn from them, communicate with them and integrate their thoughts and ideas into the process.

Over the coming months and years, I also want to focus on relationships. We have relationships with each other, with service providers, and with children, youth and their families. Transformation is an opportunity to fortify these relationships and build on our individual strengths as practitioners and leaders to create a learning culture where children, youth and families develop to their maximum capacity.

We are in the best position possible for transformation to take place - we have excellent leadership and support from the highest levels of government. I'm excited about our potential to make positive improvements and provide the best services we can to the public. By fostering what we're doing well, we will continue to develop a more responsive system. I look forward to working with all of you over the coming years.

SIGN ME UP

Please add me to your electronic distribution list.

FAMILY MATTERS
YOUR CONNECTION TO THE MINISTRY OF CHILDREN & FAMILY DEVELOPMENT & OUR SERVICE PROVIDERS
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Service Provider is Number One with Employees

The Cariboo Friendship Society in Williams Lake is leading the way as an employer of choice in Canada. The centre was rated the fifth best place to work in Canada in the Best Small & Medium Employers competition for 2006.

The competition, a partnership between the Globe and Mail, the Centre for Business Venturing at Queen's University, and Hewitt Associates, aims to improve the odds of success for small businesses. They help organizations identify strengths and challenges and develop action plans for improvement.

Marg Ahdemar, Executive Director for the Cariboo Friendship Society, originally entered her organization in the contest to see how they could improve and was ecstatic when they were rated fifth overall.

"I'm thrilled with the results" exclaimed Ahdemar. "Companies continue to offer more and more to their employees and those who made the final list are really dedicated to ensuring their staff are happy – this is a real accomplishment for us!"

Society staff participate in Big Bike Ride to raise funds for the Heart & Stroke Foundation.

A key reason the society ranked fifth is that staff feel truly valued by the organization. The Society ensures employee satisfaction by including staff in discussions and decision-making processes, which in turn increases staff engagement. Employees are consulted on what services the community needs and they help determine exactly what the centre will offer.

The society's 60 employees provide services to the entire Cariboo-Chilcotin area as well as 15 First Nations communities. Services include low income housing, shelters, Children Who Witness Abuse programs, youth justice services, pregnancy outreach, early childhood development, a transition house, a child learning centre as well as Aboriginal supported child development services.

"Staff work incredibly hard to provide these services," says Ahdemar, "And they believe in them because they know it's what the community wants and needs."

The Friendship Society also ranked first in the corporate citizenship category. Steve Hunter, Manager, Aboriginal Services in the Williams Lake MCFD office, says Ahdemar has gone to great lengths to build positive relationships in the community, "Giving back to the community is a major priority for the centre – they are committed to pulling people together to make things happen."

The society may enter the competition again this year. "We did so well last year, it would be great to use the results as a benchmark to ensure we always remain an employer of choice" says Ahdemar.

Congratulations to everyone at the Cariboo Friendship Society on your accomplishment!

Maintaining the Work-Life Balance

What makes an ideal workplace? How can businesses attract and retain the skilled employees they need? WorkLife BC, an MCFD-sponsored initiative, knows the answer: a flexible workplace that enables employees to balance life's responsibilities.

A flexible workplace can mean a variety of things: flexible hours, alternative work arrangements, job-sharing, access to training opportunities, and recognition of child and elder care responsibilities. WorkLife BC seeks to acknowledge and celebrate these employee-friendly companies.

At the first-ever WorkLife BC Forum on February 9, 2007, a total of sixteen BC businesses were recognized for helping their employees balance commitments to work and family. Businesses of all sizes were nominated from all sectors and ranged from retail outlets and credit unions, to hotels, museums, and post-secondary institutions, just to name a few!

The Employer of Choice Award went to Envision Financial while Next Level Games Inc. received the award for Innovation. Five regional Awards of Excellence and 11 Awards of Merit were also handed out.

For a complete list of winners, visit the WorkLife BC site at: http://www.worklifebc.ca/pages/awards/recipients.cfm. Also check out the case studies of exemplary workplaces, including the Cariboo Friendship Society.

Congratulations to this year's winners and thanks for making BC a great place to live and work!

The Youth Perspective

From November 19th - 23rd Vancouver played host to worldforum 2006, an international child welfare conference attended by delegates from over 36 countries. Youth from around the world were actively engaged in all aspects of the conference. They participated as planners, delegates, presenters, entertainers and volunteers.

One of the youth representatives from BC was Cheryl McLeod, an 18 year old student from Merritt. Cheryl is the Youth Vice Ambassador for the Upper Nicola Indian Band and was recently selected to serve on the MCFD Youth Advisory Council.

Cheryl was kind enough to share a few of her thoughts on her participation in worldforum 2006.

Youth share their perspective at the Youth Rights and Advocacy session

Events like worldforum are essential because they give Aboriginal youth a voice. It is crucial for all of the Aboriginal youth to be heard and understood by the communities.

I thought the Youth Town Hall was especially effective because it included a very diverse range of youth. The people weren't just hearing one voice but many voices. So often adults say they're listening but they're not. During the Town Hall I could tell that the adults genuinely heard the youth voices. That was really important.

worldforum also gave us the chance to meet and hang out with other young people. Our youth workshops led to some important dialogues and we also got to have fun together at social events like the dances.

At the closing ceremonies, I also had the honour of giving Musqueam elder Shane Point a blanket on behalf of the forum.

worldforum 2006 left a lasting impression on me. Active participation in the forum seems to have made it easier for me to speak in front of people. But the most important thing I learned is that I can do things on my own. I don't always need someone there – I can help myself.

Cowboy Love

We are pleased to share with you the third and final story from last spring's MCFD/Hollyburn Family Services writing contest for foster parents.

Robert came from a family that truly thought 'all was well' with their family. Robert had a different perspective. All was NOT well. When I first met this young man he was distant, destructive and uncommunicative. Robert was heading down the road of crime for attention.

I was working with my horses one day and Robert came into the barn. He very quietly asked, "Can I touch him?" A verbal expression was thrilling but that was just the start of his success. Robert spent most of his time learning the art of Natural Horsemanship with me. He learned that he could communicate with the horse and receive unconditional love, respect and acceptance.

Robert went from not trusting anyone to trusting himself and his horse. He explained to me that at home he could do nothing right, that he was 'not as good as' his siblings and did not feel that he was loved for who he was so was starting to do the wrong things to get attention, even if it was negative, from his parents and siblings. He felt that he was not the son or brother that his parents wanted him to be. He was never given encouragement, a hug or told that he was loved.

The day his parent came to pick him up to take him home was so emotional. Robert very proudly showed his father all the techniques he had learned with his horse. A hug, a smile and an 'I love you' were out of the question a few months ago. This day Robert got all three. His father hugged him and with a smile said, "I love you son!" Robert told his father that even cowboys hug, smile and love unconditionally.

So you see a family that didn't start so well ended VERY WELL thanks to one horse, one determined young man and the desire to be accepted by his family. I threw my cowboy hat in the air and said, "Yee haw, this family will do well!"

Note: The names have been changed to protect the privacy of parents and foster children.

Cause for Celebration

Just two years ago, only 82 of the ministry's contracted service providers had completed the accreditation process. Today, over 200 agencies have achieved accreditation! This past November, all accredited service providers were honoured at a Provincial Accreditation Conference in Richmond in recognition of their hard work, dedication and commitment.

Accreditation is a key ministry strategy for establishing province-wide standards, accountability and performance management mechanisms for enhancing services. MCFD's accreditation policy requires that contracted agencies that receive $500,000 or more in annual MCFD/CLBC funding earn and maintain accreditation.

As anyone who has been involved in the process knows, becoming accredited is no easy task. It requires commitment from all levels of staff and volunteers, and includes months of preparation, detailed reporting, client and stakeholder reviews and on-site visits.

Fraser Regional Executive Director Les Boon presents Jeanne Fike, Executive Director of Burnaby Family Life with their award.

Is the end result worth it? The answer from conference delegates was a resounding yes. As Doug Marson, Director of Corporate Services for MCFD's Interior Region explained, "Accreditation makes for better team players and therefore a stronger team as a whole. It's about quality assurance and better outcomes for clients".

Service providers in BC are achieving significant accreditation outcomes compared to other jurisdictions nationally and internationally. MCFD is also leading the way in the accreditation of its own provincial services. The Maples Adolescent Treatment Centre, Youth Custody Services, Youth Forensic Psychiatric Services and Provincial Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing all recently achieved accreditation – a first for provincial jurisdictions in Canada.

Sara Bristow, MCFD's Manager of Accreditation, said "the accreditation process is truly one where everyone works towards a common goal. It's teamwork at its best and should be celebrated as a shared accomplishment".

At the conference, each agency was presented with an achievement award. Representatives from the Council on Accreditation and the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities, as well as members of the ministry's Leadership Team and regional contract management staff, were on hand to congratulate recipients.

According to attendees, one of the greatest benefits of the day was the opportunity for people from across the province to meet and share their insights, learning and experiences.

Janice Bradshaw, Executive Director of the Canadian Mental Health Association for the Kootenays, reflected that "the day was a great way to acknowledge the hard work of contracted agencies in the accreditation process.... I will be sharing it with my Board, Management Team, and staff".

A list of accredited agencies can be found at: www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/accreditation/agencies.htm

Find out more about the accreditation process at: www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/accreditation/index.htm, or contact sara.bristow@gov.bc.ca.

Premier's Innovation and Excellence Awards 2006

This year, the Ministry of Children and Family Development is once again a leader in the number of finalists short-listed for the Premier's Innovation and Excellence Awards.

This annual event recognizes public servants for innovation, leadership and new ideas to improve service delivery. This year, of the 65 submissions received from ministries across government, three from MCFD were selected as finalists! This significant achievement represents just a small sample of the numerous exceptional projects underway across our ministry at any given time.

Our finalists represent the categories of Cross-Government Integration, Leadership and Innovation.

Congratulations to all our nominees, and our best wishes are with Dena, Mark and Bob when they attend the awards ceremony on March 27th at the Victoria Conference Centre!

Turn to page 5 to read about this year's finalists.

FAMILY MATTERS
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BRITISH COLUMBIA
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New on the MCFD Leadership Team

In recent months, some new additions and changes have been made to the Leadership Team.

Bev Dicks, Acting RED, Vancouver Coastal Region

Chuck Eamer, RED, Vancouver Island Region

Donna Knox, Chief Operations Officer

Karen Dellert, Chief Information Officer

Patrick Doyle, ADM, Strategic Human Resources

Marilyn Hedlund, Provincial Director of Child Welfare

Meet Marilyn Hedlund

Marilyn was appointed MCFD's Provincial Director of Child Welfare in January 2007.

Marilyn holds a Master of Social Work degree from the University of British Columbia and a Bachelor of Arts degree from Simon Fraser University. She has many years experience within the Saskatchewan public service in child welfare and related areas, including the past four years as Executive Director, Child and Family Services Division within Saskatchewan Community Resources, a position with many parallels to her new appointment.

Marilyn Hedlund, Provincial Director of Child Welfare

She has held other management and policy roles including Commissioner for the Saskatchewan Legal Aid Commission, Associate Executive Director of Income Security Programs which included child day care services, Senior Policy Advisor to the Deputy Minister's Office and lead policy analyst for Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children. She has been a front-line young offenders youth worker, a teen foster care worker, a special foster home worker and an assessment and planning coordinator for a residential facility.

Marilyn is pleased to join the Leadership Team and looks forward to the work ahead.

Premier's Innovation and Excellence Awards cont'd ...

Collaboration Starts Early

If you want to know how to get outstanding results in Aboriginal early childhood development (ECD), Dena Carroll is the person to ask. Since 2002, she has successfully collaborated with the federal government, provincial ministries and Aboriginal stakeholders to better support the early childhood development of Aboriginal children in BC. Dena's work has helped to shift the focus from child protection to the promotion of healthy Aboriginal children and families.

Her efforts helped establish the Office of the Aboriginal Infant Development Advisor, the only program of its kind in Canada. She also worked with the federal government to secure funding for the Aboriginal Head Start site in Cowichan, to establish the Aboriginal Head Start ECD committee for Kwadatcha and Tsay Kay Dene, and to help implement the Maternal Health Program. Her extensive work earned Dena a nomination by her colleagues for a Premier's Award for Cross-Government Integration.

Monique Gray Smith, Executive Director of Aboriginal Head Start Association of BC declares: "Dena's contribution to Aboriginal early childhood development is immeasurable. It has been her vision, her innovative ideas, her tenacity and her courage that have ensured the needs of Aboriginal children and their families are an integral part of government."

It's clear from her selection as a finalist that the awards panel thinks so too!

A Leading Light

Mark Gosse, Executive Director, Youth Justice & Youth Forensic Psychiatric Services, is a role model and an agent for change, as well as Premier's award finalist in the category of Leadership. After steering Youth Custody Services through a challenging downsizing and restructuring, Mark was able to improve morale and lead his team to excellence.

Beginning in 2003, Mark led the Youth Custody Services team on an ambitious plan to implement internationally recognized best practices. Mark's commitment to including staff, youth in custody and community partners in this process ensured buy-in and ... continued on page 6

DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

Are you a staff member or service provider involved in delivering an innovative program or service? Do you know someone who deserves to be recognized?

Click on the link below to send us your idea in 100 words or less and your suggestion may be featured in a future article. MCF.NewsletterFeedback@gov.bc.ca

Premier's Innovation and Excellence Awards cont'd ...

support for the project at all levels. His efforts paid off when, in August 2006, the Youth Custody Services team the was first custody team in North America to receive accreditation through the New York-based Council on Accreditation.

Mark engages and recognizes his team on an everyday basis as well. He supports working groups at all levels within Youth Custody Services and changes are made based on their recommendations. Mark also makes a point of visiting staff at each youth custody centre in the province throughout the year.

With this kind of leadership, it's no surprise that his staff feel empowered and valued for their hard work!

Smart Programs Make for Smart Parenting

Bob Pushak, Support Services Worker with the Penticton Child and Youth Mental Health team, is being recognized in the Innovation category for his significant advances in evidence-based programs. Bob played a key role in the development of two educational CD-Roms, both of which have been recognized by the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) as model programs.

The two programs, Parenting Wisely and Children in the Middle, are used to treat children with a broad range of behavioural problems and are widely used throughout Canada, the United States and Great Britain.

Parenting Wisely has been particularly successful. Bob adapted the program for group parent training and achieved the strongest outcomes with the program so far. An impressive 97 per cent of parents who complete Bob's program state that they would recommend it to others.

"Bob's daily use of the Parenting Wisely principles elevate and inspire clients and colleagues alike," says Amonika Schroeder, MCFD Resource Social Worker, "He infuses respect, peace and well being into the work culture and I felt privileged and honoured to have experienced his teachings, his work and his supervision."

Bob was also instrumental in publishing four treatment manuals for using the program with different populations. Currently, 15 different agencies in Penticton as well as 23 agencies elsewhere in the Interior region have partnerships with Bob to use the Parenting Wisely program.

Thanks Bob for making Parenting Wisely more accessible and meaningful for parents everywhere!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 1 - 4: Autism Biennial Congress 2007, Autism Through the Lifespan, Vancouver, BC

March 7 - 10: The 2nd International Conference on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, Victoria, BC

March 8 - 9: 8th Annual Alberta Harm Reduction Conference, Calgary, AB

March 16 - 17: Working With the DSM IV, Vancouver, BC

March 26 - 28: Spring Forward! Early Years National Conference, Toronto, ON

March 26 - 31: BC Social Work Week

March 30 - 31: Interpersonal Psychotherapy for Depressed Adolescents, Vancouver, BC

April 22 – 28: Administrative Professionals Week

April 26 – 28: 3rd National ADAC/ACTA Conference Hand In Hand: Anxiety Disorders and Comorbid Conditions, Montreal, PQ

April 29 - May 1: Family Centred Care in Context 2007 Conference, Calgary, AB

May 22 - 25: 2007 Conference, Canadian Counselling Association, Vancouver, BC

May 22 - 27: Growing Up in Our Hearts and Homes, BCFFPA - CFFA Conference, Richmond, BC

May 25 - 26: Honouring Childhood: Early Childhood Educators of BC Annual Conference, Richmond, BC

May 28-31: Bridging Ways of Knowing: Bridging Communities, Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work Annual Conference 2007, Saskatoon, SK